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With the biggest political scandal in modern Illinois history still riling voters, politicians are suddenly eager to jump on the reform bandwagon.

Already this week, suburban state lawmakers announced various plans aimed at cleaning up Illinois government. U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk pitched in with a separate proposal targeting federal campaign finance laws.

But where all this talk of fixing a corrupt political system may lead remains unknown, and many experts are skeptical lawmakers will pass any serious reform measures. Even as the ousted Rod Blagojevich faces criminal charges and another governor sits in prison, state politicians have continued to cling to one of the most wide-open campaign finance laws in the nation.

"Quite frankly, I think that as good as the chances are right now - and they are better than they ever have been - it will still be an uphill climb (for sweeping reform)," says Cindi Canary, director of the watchdog Illinois Campaign for Political Reform.

Headlining the push for ethics and campaign finance reform is a new commission formed by the new governor, Pat Quinn, himself a longtime proponent of measures aimed at cleaning up Illinois politics. That commission, led by Patrick Collins, who put former Gov. George Ryan in prison, will hear testimony over the next several weeks and then issue recommendations in April.

Monday, Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan said an emissary from his staff and the staff of Senate President John Cullerton hope to work with the commission in coming up with legislation.

Meanwhile, individual lawmakers at both the state and federal levels have been pushing plans of their own along with groups like Canary's. Proposals range from instituting strict limits on

campaign contributions to changing the way state contracts are bid.

The latter is what Canary wants, but it also seems the most elusive.

"It is a rat race and if you get rid of one, it is still a rat race and another rat will win the race," she says, pointing out that even though Blagojevich is out of office, the system is still set up to reward politicians who trade state business for big campaign donations.

Illinois' campaign finance system allows anyone to donate to politicians as much as he or she wants. Supporters say that as long as the amounts are known, voters can decide whether a donor has too much influence with a candidate. But critics contend that even a candidate's failure to disclose donors results in only a slap on the wrist from an understaffed oversight agency.

In comparison, 45 other states and the federal government have limits on how much donors can give to politicians and who can give.

State Sen. Matt Murphy, a Palatine Republican, says he is on board with a proposal introduced in the state House by Chicago Democrat Harry Osterman and Glenview Republican Elizabeth Coulson.

"My hope is that the glaring example of Rod Blagojevich will be a sufficient impetus (to push campaign finance reform)," Murphy said. "If being an international embarrassment isn't going to give us the energy to move, I don't know what is."

Yet, Cullerton and Madigan, the two Chicago Democrats who run the General Assembly, have been noncommittal on campaign finance reform. Instead, they have looked at other measures aimed at boosting voters' trust in government.

Madigan spokesman Steve Brown says the speaker is looking at making actions by the state's

ethics board more public and closing a loophole in a ban on state officials taking jobs with companies they once oversaw as state contractors.

Brown said campaign finance limits can be problematic because they open the door to unknown third parties dumping TV ads and mailers into a race without having to disclose the donors. He said it also gives wealthy candidates a leg up.

Many critics of campaign finance limits point out they don't prevent corruption. If someone is bent on taking bribes, they say, laws aren't going to stop him.

In Blagojevich's case, federal prosecutors allege he was caught jumping from phone call to phone call on a near-daily basis to strong-arm campaign cash from state contractors and even the CEO of a children's hospital. Blagojevich has denied any wrongdoing.

Canary argues the wide-open rules in Illinois make it easier for politicians to game the system.

"I think they are right," she says. "There will always be bad guys. But that is no reason to set up a system that tries to be tempting. We can make things better in this state."

On Monday lawmakers started a fresh week with a new governor, and the news conferences calling for reform started rolling in.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, a Highland Park Republican, set up a downtown event to announce he was signing on to legislation to ban contributions from groups for which congressional members secure federal grants, and Murphy said he would like to see similar laws in Illinois.

In the suburbs, state Reps. Micheal Connelly of Lisle and Darlene Senger of Naperville, both rookie Republicans, put forward a plan to make state bidding more like eBay, in which bidders could continually lower their price anonymously.

And today, Canary and Collins will host a panel downtown on ethics and campaign finance reform titled, "20 Ways to Stop Corruption in Illinois."

Kirk said the calls won't stop.

"Blagojevich," he says, "is a national figure now showing the weakness of pay-to-play laws."